

Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 L-02 ACDA-05

NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00 SAJ-01

SS-15 NSC-05 COME-00 /061 W
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P R 041015Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5603

INFO SECDEF

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 1700

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, NL

SUBJECT: REPLACEMENT FOR F-104'S

REF: THE HAGUE 1584, OSAF (SAF/RD) 290021Z MAR 74

1. AT REQUEST OF DUTCH MINISTER DEFENSE VREDELING, DR. WALTER D. LA BERG, ASSISTANT SECRETARY AIR FORCE, GAVE TWO BRIEFINGS ON APRIL 2 IN THE HAGUE. A MID-DAY SESSION AT MINISTRY OF DEFENSE WAS ATTENDED BY MINISTER VREDELING, THE TWO STATE SECRETARIES AND THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE MINISTRY AND THE TOP DUTCH AIR FORCE OFFICERS. A SECOND LATE AFTERNOON MEETING WAS HELD FOR FOUR INFLUENTIAL LABOR PARLIAMENTARIANS: ED VAN THIJN, PARTY LEADER IN THE SECOND CHAMBER; DICK DOLMAN, VAN THIJN'S DEPUTY; PIETER DANKERT, CHAIRMAN OF THE SECOND CHAMBER FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AND LABOR SPOKESMAN ON DEFENSE MATTERS; AND KLAAS DE VRIES, MEMBER OF THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE. ALL FOUR WERE SELECTED BY MINISTER VREDELING.

2. DR. LA BERGE'S BRIEFINGS CENTERED ON NATURE OF
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PRESENT AND PROSPECTIVE SOVIET THREAT AND TYPE OF

AIRCRAFT NEEDED TO MEET IT. LA BERGE'S EXCELLENT PRESENTATIONS, TAILORED TO THE DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS OF THE TWO GROUPS, WERE WELL RECEIVED BY ALL. MOD OFFICIALS DID NOT NEED TO BE CONVINCED OF REALITY OF THREAT AND NEED OF SOPHISTICATED, VERSATILE AIRCRAFT SUCH AS F-16 TO MEET IT. HOWEVER, BRIEFING WAS VERY USEFUL IN GIVING THEM SPECIFICS WITH WHICH TO PRESS CASE FOR F-16 AS F-104 SUCCESSOR.

3. SECOND BRIEFING WAS EVEN MORE VALUABLE IN THAT MANY LABOR PARLIAMENTARIANS, IN PARTICULAR DANKERT, HAVE EXPRESSED SERIOUS DOUBT THAT AN AIRCRAFT AS SOPHISTICATED (AND EXPENSIVE) AS F-16 IS NEEDED TO FULFILL LIMITED DUTCH NATO DEFENSE ROLE. DANKERT AND OTHERS IN HIS PARTY HAVE SAID AN AIRCRAFT SUCH AS THE NORTHROP F5-E WOULD ADEQUATELY SATISFY DUTCH NATO REQUIREMENTS AT A MUCH LOWER COST. THEY ALSO HAVE SAID THAT DUTCH WOULD BE CONTRIBUTING TO ARMS RACE IF GON WERE TO BUY AIRCRAFT AS ADVANCED AS F-16.

4. THE FOUR PARLIAMENTARIANS APPEARED TO BE IMPRESSED BY THE MEETING. LA BERGE GAVE DETAILED, DOCUMENTED BRIEFING, WITH VISUAL AIDS, ON FORMIDABLE QUALITY OF PRESENT AND FORESEEABLE SOVIET AND WARSAW PACT AIR CAPABILITIES IN THE CENTRAL REGION. HE ALSO MADE EXCELLENT CASE FOR NEED OF AIRCRAFT OF F-16'S CAPABILITIES AND SOPHISTICATION. SESSION LASTED FOR TWO HOURS AND WAS INTERSPERSED WITH SEVERAL KNOWLEDGEABLE QUESTIONS FROM DANKERT AND DE VRIES. QUESTIONS RANGED FROM SPECIFICS, E.G., WAS F-16 STABLE WHEN FLYING AT LOW ALTITUDES AT LOW SPEEDS, TO THE MORE GENERAL, E.G. WITH THE RAPID RECENT IMPROVEMENT OF MISSILES, WOULD PILOTED FIGHTER AIRCRAFT STILL HAVE IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN 1980'S.

5. COMMENT: WHILE QUALITY OF BRIEFINGS WAS NOT IN DOUBT, OBJECT OF THE EXERCISE WAS TO HAVE SOME BROADENING IMPACT ON THE VIEWPOINTS OF THE FOUR KEY PARLIAMENTARIANS, PARTICULARLY DANKERT AND DE VRIES, BELLWETHERS FOR THE REST OF THE LABOR PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON DEFENSE MATTERS. BEFORE THE BRIEFING SATE SECRETARY STEMERDINK
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TOLD CHARGE IT WAS "TOO LATE" TO INFLUENCE PARLIAMENTARY THINKING, AND THAT GAP BETWEEN VREDELING AND HIS PARTY COLLEAGUES WAS AS BIG AS EVER.

6. AT LABOR PARTY CONGRESS NEXT WEEK, IT APPEARS LIKELY MOTION WILL BE ADOPTED RECOMMENDING PURCHASE OF SIMPLER, CHEAPER SUCCESSOR TO F104'S THAN F-16 OR MIRAGE. LABOR PARTY PARLIAMENTARIANS, SUCH AS DANKERT,

WHO HAVE ALREADY ESPOUSED SUCH A POSITION CANNOT
REALISTICALLY BE EXPECTED TO OPPOSE SUCH A MOTION. THE
BEST THAT CAN BE HOPED FOR IS THAT HE AND OTHERS LIKE
HIM WILL NOT MAKE SUCH AN ISSUE OF MATTER AS TO DETER
GON FROM SELECTION OF F-16 TOWARD WHICH IT IS MOVING.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL LEADERS, MEETINGS, REARMAMENT, THREATS, MILITARY PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975THEHA01700
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750117-0002
From: THE HAGUE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750479/aaaactza.tel
Line Count: 121
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 THE HAGUE 1584, 75 OSAF (SAF/R290021Z, 75 MAR 74
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 APR 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <17 SEP 2003 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REPLACEMENT FOR F-104'S
TAGS: MASS, NL
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006